

Asia Pacific Media Educator

| Issue 11

Article 1

7-2001

Editorial: In this issue

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Recommended Citation

Loo, Eric, Editorial: In this issue, *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 11, 2001, 3-3.

Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/apme/vol1/iss11/1>

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In This Issue

When Hong Kong was returned to mainland Chinese rule in July 1997, the inevitable demise of media autonomy, academic freedom and judiciary independence was a major concern in the 'one country two systems' form of governance. Four years after the handover, the level of public discourse, number of publication titles, tabloidese, civic protests and political debates are as active as then.

This issue begins with two contributions by Yan Mei Ning and Tim Hamlett who paint a picture of how freedom of expression is continually being re-defined, curtailed, yet in other ways protected by the judiciary in its judgement of defamation cases.

Nevertheless, the media's affiliation with governments as reflected in its muted coverage of dissension, for instance in Malaysia, poses a challenge for media educators in Asia in terms of reconciling media realities with the idealised notion of what the media ought to be. Shakila Manan's stylistic analysis of the New Straits Times coverage of the reformasi movements in Malaysia following the arrest of former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim in September 1998 appropriately raises the question of whether the media in Southeast Asia can be considered to be an effective tool of political education for the people. Ibnu Hamad, Helmi Qodrat Ichtat and Zulham suggest that the relationship between media consumption and political participation was low in the case of Indonesia. Their research suggests that several decades of government suppression of 'practical politics' among university students have contributed to the weakening role of the media, thus its credibility in generating political activism.

Which leads to the question of how public trust in the media can be enhanced? Tom Dickson and Elizabeth Topping cited public journalism as one of the practical avenues, albeit some apprehension by newspaper editors in the US of the genre's apparent lack of objectivity in its reporting of community issues.

Practical issues of training are discussed by Stephen Tanner, Nigel McCarthy; Roger Patching; David Cameron and Stephen Quinn, each drawing from their experience in teaching in diverse cultural environments.

I hope this issue comprising articles by media scholars from the region encourage you to contribute to APME your thoughts on how as media educators and trainers, we can remain critical, yet relevant and inspiring to the industry and students alike.

– ***Eric Loo, Editor***